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C O N F I D E N T I A L VATICAN 006195

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/WE (DEBORAH MENNUTI); S (CRAIG KELLY)

FROM EMBASSY VATICAN/MESSAGE NO. 214/01

E.O. 12958:DECL:11/29/11

TAGS: [PREL](#) [RM](#) [RO](#) [IS](#) [VT](#)

SUBJECT: VATICAN PUSHING FORWARD ON THE MIDDLE EAST

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR NICHOLSON FOR REASONS 1.5 (A) AND (D) .

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11. (C) THE VATICAN ANNOUNCED ON NOVEMBER 28 THAT IT HAS INVITED THE LEADERS OF THE DIFFERENT CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES IN THE HOLY LAND TO A MEETING ON DECEMBER 13. THE VATICAN PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT CATEGORIZES THE MEETING AS PURELY "PASTORAL" IN NATURE.

12. (C) DCM SPOKE WITH HIS ISRAELI COUNTERPART NOVEMBER 29. ISRAELI DCM SAID THAT HIS EMBASSY HAS DISCOVERED THAT THE MEETING IS BEING ORGANIZED BY THE VATICAN FOREIGN MINISTRY, AND NOT ONE OF THE VATICAN COUNCILS (I.E. MINISTRIES) WHICH WOULD NORMALLY BE INVOLVED IN RELIGIOUS/PASTORAL AFFAIRS. IN ADDITION, THE ISRAELIS BELIEVE THAT THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE MEETING WAS MEANT TO COINCIDE WITH A DOCUMENT ISSUED BY THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS IN ISRAEL AND THE TERRITORIES CONDEMNING THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NAZARETH MOSQUE.

13. (C) COMMENT: THE TIMING OF THIS MEETING, COUPLED WITH THE VATICAN'S REQUEST FOR A MEETING WITH SECRETARY POWELL IS A STRONG INDICATION THAT THE VATICAN IS PREPARED TO BEGIN ACTIVELY PUSHING WHAT IT CONSIDERS ITS INTERESTS IN THE MEPP. IT IS LIKELY THAT IT SEES AN OPENING CREATED BY THE WAR ON TERRORISM TO PRESSURE THE ISRAELIS ON THE ISSUE OF INTERNATIONAL GUARANTEES FOR THE RELIGIOUS SHRINES. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT THAT FOREIGN MINISTER WILL RAISE THE ISSUE OF THE NAZARETH MOSQUE WHEN HE MEETS THE SECRETARY ON DECEMBER 4. NICHOLSON

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